

# WIOA Guiding Principles

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*Extracted from Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; Final Rule*

## **III. Rulemaking Authority and Background**

### **A. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Principles**

On July 22, 2014, President Obama signed WIOA, the first legislative reform of the public workforce system in more than 15 years, which passed Congress by a wide bipartisan majority. WIOA supersedes WIA and amends the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), the Wagner-Peyser Act, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. WIOA presents an extraordinary opportunity for the public workforce system to accelerate its transformational efforts and demonstrate its ability to improve job and career options for our citizens through an integrated, job-driven public workforce system that links diverse talent to our nation's businesses. It supports the development of strong, vibrant regional economies where businesses thrive and people want to live and work.

WIOA reaffirms the role of the customer-focused one-stop delivery system, a cornerstone of the public workforce development system, and enhances and increases coordination among several key employment, education, and training programs. Most provisions in WIOA took effect on July 1, 2015, the first full program year after enactment, although the new statutory State Plans and performance accountability system requirements take effect July 1, 2016. Title IV of WIOA, however, took effect upon enactment.

WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. WIOA has six main purposes: (1) increasing access to and opportunities for the employment, education, training, and support services for individuals, particularly those with barriers to employment; (2) supporting the alignment of workforce investment, education, and economic development systems in support of a comprehensive, accessible, and high-quality workforce development system; (3) improving the quality and labor market relevance of workforce investment, education, and economic development efforts; (4) promoting improvement in the structure and delivery of services; (5) increasing the prosperity of workers and employers; and (6) providing workforce development activities that increase employment, retention, and earnings of participants and that increase postsecondary credential attainment and as a result, improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency, increase economic self-sufficiency, meet skill requirements of employers, and enhance productivity and competitiveness of the nation.

Beyond achieving the requirements of the new law, WIOA offers an opportunity to continue to modernize the public workforce system, and achieve key hallmarks of a customer centered public workforce system, where the needs of business and workers drive workforce solutions, where one-stop centers and partners provide excellent customer service to job seekers and businesses, where the public workforce system pursues continuous improvement through evaluation and data-driven policy, and where the public workforce system supports strong regional economies.

Regulations and guidance implementing WIOA titles I and III are issued by DOL, with the exception of the joint regulations issued by DOL and ED on the provisions in title I relating to unified and combined planning, performance, and the one-stop delivery system. Regulations and guidance on implementing titles II and IV of WIOA are issued by ED. The Joint WIOA Final Rule and the ED WIOA Final Rules are published elsewhere in this issue of the Federal Register.

WIOA retains much of the structure of WIA, but with critical changes to advance greater coordination and alignment. Under title I, subtitle A, each State will be required to develop a single, unified strategic plan that is applicable to six core workforce development programs. The core programs consist of the adult, dislocated worker, and youth formula programs administered by the Department under WIOA title I; the Adult Education and Family Literacy program administered by ED under WIOA title II; the ES program administered by the Department and authorized by the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by WIOA title III; and the VR program administered by ED and authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA title IV (VR program). In addition to core programs, WIOA provides States the opportunity to include other key one-stop partner programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Unemployment Insurance (UI), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Perkins Career Technical Education in a Combined State Plan. The law also includes a common performance accountability system applicable to all of the core programs.

The remainder of WIOA title I authorizes the adult, dislocated worker, and youth formula programs; the State and local WDBs (formerly workforce investment boards or WIBs); the designation of regions and local areas; local plans; the one-stop delivery system; national programs, including Job Corps, YouthBuild, Indian and Native American (INA) programs, and Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) programs; technical assistance and evaluations; and general administrative provisions currently authorized under title I of WIA. Title II retains and amends the Adult Education and Family Literacy Program currently authorized under title II of WIA. Title III contains amendments to the Wagner-Peyser Act relating to the ES and Workforce and Labor Market Information System (WLMIS), and requires the Secretary to establish a WIAC. Title IV contains amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which were also included under title IV of WIA; it also requires the Secretary of Labor to establish an Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities. Finally, title V contains general

provisions similar to the provisions applicable under title V of WIA as well as the effective dates and transition provisions.

## **B. Major Changes from the Workforce Investment Act of 1998**

This section contains a summary of the major changes from WIA. As indicated above, WIOA retains much of the structure of WIA. Major changes in WIOA are:

- **Aligns Federal investments to support job seekers and employers.** The Act provides for States to prepare a single Unified State Plan that identifies a 4-year strategy for achieving the strategic vision and goals of the State for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers. States govern the core programs as one system assessing strategic needs and aligning them with service strategies to ensure the public workforce system meets employment and skill needs of all workers and employers.
- **Streamlines the governing bodies that establish State, regional and local workforce investment priorities.** WIOA makes State and Local WDBs more agile and well positioned to meet local and regional employers' workforce needs by reducing the size of the WDBs and assigning them additional responsibilities to assist in the achievement of the State and local strategic workforce vision and goals. The State WDBs continue to have a majority of business representation and a business chair and work for all workers and job seekers, including low-skilled adults, youth, and individuals with disabilities, while they foster innovation, and ensure streamlined operations and service delivery excellence.
- **Creates a common performance accountability system and information for job seekers and the public.** WIOA ensures that Federal investments in employment, education, and training programs are evidence-based and data-driven, and accountable to participants and the public. It establishes a performance accountability system that applies across the core programs, by generally applying six primary indicators of performance: entry into unsubsidized employment at two points in time, median earnings, attainment of postsecondary credentials, measurable skill gains, and effectiveness in serving employers.
- **Fosters regional collaboration to meet the needs of regional economies.** WIOA promotes alignment of workforce development programs with regional economic development strategies to meet the needs of local and regional employers.
- **Enhances access to high quality services through the network of one-stop delivery system.** WIOA helps job seekers and employers acquire the services they need in centers and online, clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the one-stop partner programs, adds the TANF program as a required one-stop partner unless the Governor objects, requires competitive selection of one-stop operators, and requires the use by the one-stop delivery system of a common one-stop delivery identifier or brand developed by the Secretary of Labor ("American Job Center," see Joint WIOA Final Rule).

- **Improves services to individuals with disabilities.** WIOA stresses physical and programmatic accessibility, including the use of accessible technology to increase individuals with disabilities' access to high quality workforce services.
- **Makes key investments for disconnected youth.** WIOA emphasizes services to disconnected youth to prepare them for successful employment by requiring that a minimum of 75 percent of youth formula program funds be used to help OSY, in contrast to the 30 percent required under WIA. WIOA increases OSYs' access to WIOA services, including pre-apprenticeship opportunities that result in registered apprenticeship. It adds a requirement that at least 20 percent of formula funds at the local level be used on work-based training activities such as summer jobs, OJT, and apprenticeship.
- **Helps employers find workers with the necessary skills.** WIOA contributes to economic growth and business expansion by ensuring the public workforce system is job-driven—matching employers with skilled individuals. WIOA requires Local WDBs to promote the use of industry and sector partnerships that include key stakeholders in an industry cluster or sector that work with public entities to identify and address the workforce needs of multiple employers.

Additionally, successful implementation of many of the approaches called for within WIOA, such as career pathways and sector strategies, require robust relationships across programs and with businesses, economic development, education and training institutions, including community colleges and career and technical education, local entities, and supportive services agencies.